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Prologue

[image]

(Picture is Birchspark)

*Soft strands of grass tickled his paws as Clo*udfur scampered over the moist earth. This place was unrecognizable, though he's been to Tinder Valley before. Warm and blazing, the sun lit the sky with a radiance beyond the hazy sunrise of the Frozen Forest.

The tom rolled his body on the ground, marking it with his scent. "I'm here."

It was the scent of a loner, desperate for a companion. Cloudfur laid on his back a few seconds, about to flip to his paws when suddenly a little white speck dripped onto his nose.

In his line of view, a cat appeared and Cloudfur bristled.

"W-Who are you?"

"Shush...," the silver tabby purred, "I'm Birchspark. And you're Cloudfur? Of FallClan?"

"Yeah, but how-"

"Don't worry about it," the tom purred, touching his tail gently to Cloudfur's shoulder. "Just follow me."

If he was being honest with himself, Cloudfur would say that Birchspark was a very attractive tom. His light, creamy scent brought forth a side of Cloudfur that he didn't know existed. The charcoal-furred cat eagerly followed.

Birchspark led him into the cool woods, slipping in and out of the sunlight as leaves caressed the trees that held tightly onto strong branches. Most trees back at home were nimble, worn away from years of the persistent onslaught of frost.

Time was limitless and before he knew it, the sun was at its peak. He embraced the gentle heat shining from the big bulb; but, fear itched at the back of his mind. If he was dead, was his soul currently wandering in the Starry Night or the Burning Light?

Cloudfur had not a clue but Birchspark's abrupt pause reassured him that his questions would soon be answered. They were paused at a large puddle of water. Birchspark whipped around sharply, flicking his tail towards the calm water.

"Get in."

Cloudfur did as he was told and waded in the surprisingly warm ripples of blue. A surge of energy coursed through his veins and a sense of belonging tingled in his dark fur.

He turned, confused, "Now wha-"

Before he could stop him, Birchspark slammed his weight against Cloudfur, splashing droplets of water. He bristled, shocked by the sudden intrusion, but noticed the cheeky smile in Birchspark's dark blue eyes.

The silvery cat began to purr, "Cloudfur, you're so strong I would hate to meet you in a battle..." Birchspark rasped his tongue across his ear.

"Mph...?" Cloudfur mewed, blushing under his fur. He wasn't sure what was happening but delight spread from his head down to his tail tip. He embraced it though, rubbing his face against Birchspark's neck fur. The tom's scent wafted in the air, alluring Cloudfur and he pressed his paws against him so that they switched positions.

The white tom's amused gaze settled on Cloudfur and he smiled, "Stop." Birchspark vanished with a snap, and Cloudfur's paws fell onto where his back used to be.

In an instant the water was freezing cold and he leapt onto the bank, surrounded by the dead trees of winter as a blizzard roared victoriously against his body.

Little specks of snow

Is but a vision to a crow

Circles in the sky

Reveals the light that might die....

Chapter 1

[image]

(Picture of Hollowmoon)

*Blood rushed to his heart, pounding in his ears. He bre*athed heavily in his warm nest. Birchspark's faint scent lingered in his nose, finding himself missing the pretty white tom. Cloudfur bristled with a singe of shame, reminiscing the feel of fur against fur. *It's not right....*, Cloudfur reminded himself. Tom were not meant to be mates....

The stars shimmering through the bark of the warriors' den were indifferent. They blanketed Cloudfur's pelt with a white sheen, soothing his inner fears. Maybe it wasn't as bad as he thought...

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"Ok, every cat up! Come on, we've got work to do!" The booming voice of Jaggedscar sprang upon every cat's ears. Several warriors groaned and yawned with fatigue before forcing themselves to step out into the dawn. The early morning rays filtered across the camp. Cloudfur shook himself, trotting to the clearing.

FallClan had a very spacious camp with a stream running gently to the side. Hollowmoon found it quite convenient, for it led to a clean pool dipping into the medicine cat den. She had long black fur and bright blue eyes that always comforted Cloudfur in his tribulations. Maybe she'd make sense of his dream.

"Hollowmoon, I have to-"

"Cloudfur!" Jaggedscar mewed. He sighed, looking at the deputy. "You're on morning patrol with Redquill and Cherrypaw."

"Ok I'll get right to it."

"Don't let those leaves scare you ok?" The larger tom winked. It was a known fact that Cloudfur, as a kit, was petrified of leaves; how
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the gag still survived to this day perplexed him.

He murmured a quick "sorry," and followed his Clanmates.

The day passed swiftly and still Cloudfur's mind buzzed with the ominous words Birchspark left in his paws. It didn't make sense at all. He blushed under his fur, realizing that the white tom had attempted to seduce him.

Or maybe he just wanted to get a rise out of him. What sort of cat would play with his emotions then smack a prophecy at the end of it?

Soon enough, Cloudfur found himself wandering into Hollowmoon's den. He was satisfied to see that she had no wounds or ailments to tend to. The scrawny black cat was drinking up water with her tongue; her ears perked and eyes widened when he entered.

"Oh no this will not do," she sighed, "I've had too much work in my paws to last a moon! Great StarClan give me a break!"

"Please Hollowmoon, calm down," Cloudfur purred, bumping his nose to her cheek. She huffed and looked away.

"I'm telling you Cloudfur, become a medicine cat and see where it leaves you!"

"You seem like you don't enjoy it," he chuckled. "Isn't what all that training was for?"

"Oh it's a joy alright...," she complained, "A real killjoy. Now, what do you want?" Hollowmoon stepped towards her herb storage.

"No need for that.... I, uh, had a dream is all that I wanted to-"

"Hold on before you go any further." The she-cat checked all entrances to her den and with a whisk of her tail shielded the two from any prying eyes. "Tell me about it," she grinned, folding her paws beneath her like she was about to hear an elder's fable.

Cloudfur settled across from her; he wasn't sure what to make of her.... Intrigue. "Well... I..." He looked into the pool between them.

His reflection stared back, round green eyes switching back and forth. This cat wasn't him; no, it was the ideal cat. The cat he wished he could be. He wanted to slip into the water and follow this oblivious version of him and see what mysteries awaited. What chances he could play with the world. What chances he had with Birchspark, or any other tom for that matter.

"Hey, handsome, you're not that handsome," Hollowmoon's voice interceded. Her calm, ember depths told him she was only teasing.

"Sorry," Cloudfur murmured. "I just can't stand it," his voice seethed with anger.

"What happened?"

"I think a tom was trying to..... seduce me...," he avoided her gaze, ashamed by what he just said.

"What do you mean?" He looked up to see her perplexed face.

"Well he was... very attractive and we were playing around and then..."

"Stop right there buddy," she grinned. Cloudfur bristled.

"Um nothing happened...," he murmured awkwardly, "He vanished..."

"Oh...." She looked at the pool between them, "I'm sorry."

"Don't be... It was only a dream."

"Well I knew you were gay but I didn't know you were *that* gay!" Hollowmoon laughed in amusement. "Silly cat!" She started to her paws.

"But it was so... real," Cloudfur whispered. "His name was Birchspark."

That stopped her in her tracks. "*Birchspark*?! That weirdo who went rogue and left us for BreeezeClan!"

"Yeah, him," he murmured, "I think he's in Starry Night though...."

"Well that's good," she flicked her tail. "Did he say anything?"

"Yeah. Look, Hollowmoon, I'm sorry for taking some of your resting time away-"

"Don't worry about it," the black she-cat mewed, "I knew this would happen."

Cloudfur was about to ask when she said, "I had a vision earlier today. About you... It wasn't clear but now I *know* your dream was a message from StarClan. What did he say?"

"I don't remember...," he frowned. He jolted, hearing the faint whisper of leaves beckoning him in the wind as a small voice breathed into his ear. Cloudfur perked his ears, tuning Hollowmoon's voice out.

"*Little specks of snow...*" The charcoal tom's breath grew shaky as a rush of cold air stirred around his fur.

"Is but a vision to a crow..." He gasped slightly as the harsh movement of wings hummed in his ear. Hollowmoon stared at him intently. She didn't know what to make of such strange behavior.

"Circles in the sky." He fell hard from the sky, yowling for help. No cat heard his shrill cries in the sky, swirling with thick thunder clouds waiting to strike.

"Reveals the light that might die...."

Chapter 2

[image]

(Picture of Cloudfur)

"Cloudfur? Cloudfur, wake up!"

Cool water splashed onto his face and he jolted upright. His breath caught in his throat.

"Hollowmoon.....," he mewed, frightened, "I... I..." The tom's fur bristled straight out from all sides.

"Shh." She murmured, pressing her nose to his ear. "You can tell me later but for now, just... Chill the hell out."

The black she-cat purred, prodding some herbs forward, "Eat these and lay."

Cloudfur did as he was told and nibbled on it's soft leaves. He didn't know how long he had been asleep, but he could tell that it had been a while. Such an awful dream seemed so short, but how could it have lasted hours? Birchspark's haunting words numbed his mind, solidifying into a resolve...

"I.... I don't know what they mean...," he whined, "All I remember is Birchspark telling me..."

"Eat," she mewed firmly, "Cloudfur, I swear, I thought you were gonna have a heart attack with all that yowling! You need to slow your heartbeat." Hollowmoon kneaded his stomach with her paws, massaging him and pressed her ear against him. He shifted, flicking his tail.

"I'm fine...."

"Silence!" She whispered. She checked his paw-pads, dabbing him with more water. Cloudfur hadn't noticed before, but heat rolled off his fur in waves and he was panting. Which only made him pant

more to rid himself of the heat.

A few moments later, she looked up at him. "Okay, now tell me."

"Hollowmoon... I know this might sound like nonsense, having a dream about a cat (a tom at that!) trying to uh seduce me....," Cloudfur blushed under his fur.

"Cloudfur, I think there's a lot more to Birchspark than we know...," she gazed off to the distance wishfully. "Everything he did.... Everything he was... he meant something... I don't understand him but I know that he wanted to make something out of nothing."

"What do you mean?"

"Maybe it was all an act."

"Maybe..."

"So what was it he said?"

"He said-" A sharp pang in his throat caught him off guard and gasped, "H-He.... He said..." Cloudfur whimpered as the pain increased tenfold, spreading to his head in the form of a headache. "Oh god... oh..." He gritted his teeth, hissing and clawing at the earth.

"Cloudfur....," Hollowmoon's voice held deep worry. "It's okay, rest..." The tom slumped in his nest, breathing rapidly as the pain receded immediately. A cold rush of air whisked through his fur, as if something was leaving him. Whatever it was, it didn't want him to tell her.

"I-It doesn't matter."

"Okay, Cloudfur," the she-cat sighed. "Sometimes I worry about you..." She yawned, curling up in her own nest opposite from him.

"I know..."

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The following morning, Cloudfur woke up with the a light headache. His dreams were filled with nothing but black, and thoughts circling his subconscious until his brain couldn't take it anymore. It was the worst dream he'd ever had. *Just a silly dream, just a silly dream...*, he repeated to himself over and over again. As the sun rose and seeped upon the horizon, the tom battled with the fear invading his being. Walking in the woods never felt so.... lonely. At the same time, every step he took felt like it was monitored. Like he was being watched.

Cloudfur managed to subdue the feeling; he just needed to drink more water or eat more herbs. Or find someway to expel his desires that seemed to be eating him alive. Accept that he was attracted to toms and just move on.

"Cats of FallClan who know the skill of a warrior, gather!" The loud boom of Krestlestar's voice vibrated through the camp like a split in the earth. Fellow warriors and apprentices slowly crowded towards the she-cat's pedestal, a frozen waterfall. She balanced easily on one of the stones above the cats and flicked her tail for Jaggedscar to join her.

"FallClan is blessed to welcome two new warriors today!" She purred, "Sagepaw and Mosspaw, please step forward." The two apprentices, a pure white tom and a gray she-cat, padded to the center. Their mentors gazed on with pride.

"Sagepaw...," Krestlestar leapt gracefully from her post, "Do you accept the life of a true warrior and promise to shiver with indignation at every injustice that falls upon your ears?"

"Y-Yes, I do..," he murmured. She touched noses with the small tom. He stretched his neck to join her, shaking with anxiety. Cloudfur felt bad for the little cat.

"Then you are a warrior of FallClan, and a warrior of mine. In honor of your compassion and intellect, your new name will be Sageneck." Meows of approval and soft purrs erupted from the Clan. Krestlestar rasped her tongue across Sageneck's cheek and he bowed. The calico she-cat turned towards Mosspaw.

"Mosspaw," she gazed proudly, "Do you accept the life of a true warrior and promise to shiver with indignation at every injustice that falls upon your ears?"

"Yes!" The apprentice squeaked happily. Krestlestar chuckled.

"Then you are a warrior of FallClan, and a warrior of mine. In honor of your ferocity and humble nature, your new name will be Mosstail."

Like she did with Sageneck, Krestlestar joined her nose to Mosstail's and licked her cheek. Mosstail squeaked in excitement, wagging her tail back-and-forth. Her eyes shown like two large green moons. The Clan erupted in purrs and meows, congratulating the new warriors. Cloudfur joined in the excitement as well, rubbing heads with the two. They were only a few moons younger than he, but he felt old witnessing his first warrior ceremony as a warrior.

The sun receded into the earth, and before long the moon cast its white glare upon the frosty grass. Tonight was the gathering of all Clans, something that all FallClan cats looked forward to. They were known as the most reasonable of the Clans, the calmest; but, of course, they had their flaws.

Krestlestar led her Clan out into the bitter forest.

Personal Note:

Please vote/comment :3 If it's getting boring, just tell me I always accept constructive criticism BTW..... If I ever lead a warrior cats Clan, this is what it would be like XD ;-;

Chapter 3

Dead leaves and frost crackled beneath their paws. A wind howled past Cloudfur's ear and he shivered. The night was always eerie, always threatening..... Queens told tales of wandering kits getting swept away from the ghosts of the breeze, and even though they were just old stories, he always wondered if they were true. After all, only warriors could go out alone in the forest.

Wingfire danced on his toes, chattering his teeth, "Damn, Cloudfur why is the gathering always at night?" He complained happily in his ear; before Cloudfur could reply he scampered off to a group of warriors.

The tom bristled in embarrassment. *Why is it always at night?* Cloudfur powdered with his thoughts before brushing them aside. He always worried about nothing and he reminded himself to take his daily herb in the morning.

"Cloudfur, you're awfully quiet..," Hollowmoon murmured beside him. He frowned, forgetting she was there.

"I'm always quiet..."

"Aren't you excited!?" Her eyes gleamed, "Don't tell Krestlestar, but I think me and the other medicine cats are making a breakthrough...."

"Really?" He mewed.

"Yeah! Haha but I don't want to draw attention to something that might not-"

"Cats of FallClan, thread carefully!" Krestlestar mewed above the hum of talking cats. "Keep close to your peers."

The Clan had reached the rocky area that lead directly to the smooth boulders of Stone Hollow. It was a short climb but if one wasn't careful, he could injure himself.

"Soo...," the black she-cat purred, lowering her voice, "Got any toms you're interested in?"

Cloudfur blushed hotly, swallowing, "Hollowmoon! Cats outside the Clan are off limits," he hissed.

"I know but there's nothing wrong with a little flirting," she chuckled, twining her tail with his as they climbed the stony wall. Hollowmoon heaved herself over wall, helping Cloudfur.

"You're one cheeky cat," he grinned, looking over the wall to make sure his other Clanmates made it over safe.

"You know it," the she-cat winked and they continued into the clearing. Large, flat stones encompassed the clearing, streaked in the cool light of the full moon. Cats from all Clans poured into the slight bowl, mingling among themselves. Cloudfur felt his breathing quicken immediately.

"Good luck," Hollowmoon licked his ear, racing off towards the thicket where the medicine cats met. The tom watched her tail disappear in the crowd.

"Damn it...," he murmured, timidly weaving through the crowd, he kept his ears and tail tucked, settling into a comfortable spot off the the edge where he could be alone. Cloudfur groomed himself to get his fur from sticking up.

His Clanmates divided into the crowd as well. Some cats kept to their Clanmates, avoiding others. There were some who still disagreed with the gathering, too independent ad proud to admit that they lived in an ecosystem with cats just like them.

Krestlestar joined Lionstar of SnowClan, Ashstar of RockClan, and Icestar of BreezeClan. Each of the Clans reminded Cloudfur of the big ecosystem all Clan cats occupied; an environment of harsh but adaptable weather with beauty found at every corner.

He licked his fur throughly to calm his invading thoughts. That dream didn't matter now; what mattered was what was before him.

"Hello! Cats of all Clans!" Lionstar's deep voice boomed across the

clearing and cats settled down. "I hope every car is having a splendid moon!"

Murmurs erupted; Lionstar was always a florid cat of speech.

"Good news have befallen Lionstar and his Clan," Lionstar spoke. Cloudfur tilted his head; it was funny how he referred to himself in third person, "Lionstar recently named a new apprentice, Blueeye of SnowClan."

The appropriate mews of approval scattered throughout the clearing and Cloudfur chained his next to see a pretty she-cat gazing proudly at her leader.

"Our prey is.... The usual," he chuckled, "And we are a mighty Clan! We are SnowClan!"

Cloudfur spotted Krestlestar roll her eyes and he chuckled. Lionstar was always so full of himself. SnowClan mewed in approval while others looked on in disdain.

Ashstar stepped forward as the noise died down and recited his Clan's news. Cloudfur found himself tuning out the buzz and chatter of the Clan cats and wandering out into the pine trees. The smell induced his senses and he stepped calmly out into the smooth ground dotted with snow.

A small pool dipped below and he drank from it as it sparkles on his tongue. Cloudfur sighed, wishing he could escape. He didn't know what but he always knew something was missing.

"Your teeth are soo white!" A melodic voice sprang upon his thoughts. He bristled, looking up at a shining Birchspark. His eyes beheld Cloudfur easily, calculating.

"Cloudfur, you don't have to be afraid."

"Stop! You're... You're not real..," his voice choked. Even then he didn't believe himself.

"Yes I am. Just dead is all," Birchspark purred, winking, "You know I died for something I loved."

"What was that?" Cloudfur squeaked, feeling like a kit again.

"You. And others like you. Just in a few moments you will meet a few special individuals..."

"I.... I...," he didn't know what to say, "I don't understand."

"Oh don't worry, cutie, you'll know soon enough. My prophecy must be completed by you too."

"Birchspark....," Cloudfur shrank in his fur, "Excuse me for asking but..... how did you..."

"That's for me to know and you to find out." With that, Birchspark's paws bounded into the water, splashing the tom. "Follow me!"

"W-Wait! Please! Tell me more!" he whimpered, racing after the pretty tom. He was scared and terrified that he'd have the same dream... the dream where he was falling.....

Birchspark's voice echoed off the pines, leading him over logs and broken twigs. His purring soothed his worried, but at the same time ignited his determination. Cloudfur growled, moving faster.

He stopped as he broke into a clearing. He could no longer hear Birchspark's voice. Or his purr or his fur brushing against the trees leading Cloudfur.

"God...," the tom choked. He felt truly alone.

Chapter 4

*A silent wind howled. For se*conds, Cloudfur heard not a mouse stir. With a sweep of his tail, he resolved to return to the gathering. Maybe he was delusional... maybe Birchspark was just a silly dream. He'd never find a tom to be his mate. He stood, disappointed; the cold breeze unsettled him. He'd have to be quick unless he wanted to freeze to death.

Before he could continue, the foreign scent of a cat stopped him in his tracks. *Birchspark?* No. Some cat else... Cloudfur padded cautiously, feeling the cold earth against his paws. *No cat's as foolish as me...*, he thought bitterly. *I should just-*

A lean form slammed into his side, making him buckle over. Cloudfur hissed, unsheathing his claws. He arched his back.

A dark gray tom stood before him, gazing coldly at him. "You're Cloudfur aren't you?" He hissed. The tom's fur laid flat on his back, and his nose was tilted to the air. *What a snob...*, Cloudfur thought.

"Yeah, w-what's it to you?" He tried not to sound intimidated but failed miserably.

"Birchspark. You know of him, right?" His dark green eyes glared harshly at him as if seething right into his soul. He shivered.

"Every Clan does!" Cloudfur mewed, "He's just a myth now."

"No, Cloudfur, he's not...," he mewed, "You know just as much as I do that he's got a role bigger than the Clans ever anticipated." The dark tom groomed his paws, "So why are you trying to lie?"

"How do you know my name?"

The tom let out a mrrow of laughter, purring, "He told me of course! Now it's up to us to find the other two cats."

"How do you know it's not just us?" Cloudfur murmured nervously,

"All he told me was that stupid rhyme..."

"All he told me was a name. Your name. And who you were...," he replied. "I guess we're just puzzle pieces, eh?"

He nodded, unsure what to say. The unnamed tom circled around him a bit, flicking his tail.

"So, tell me, what was the prophecy?"

He bristled, uncomfortable under his gaze. "I don't even know your name...," he murmured quietly.

"Oh, excuse my poor manners," he didn't sound sorry, "I'm Coldholly; and I must say, you're rather an intriguing subject."

"*What*?" Cloudfur's eyes widened slightly. He wanted to leave; he felt like Coldholly was just messing with his head.

"I attacked you because I wanted to see what you would do." Coldholly pursed his lips, "Instead of shredding me to pieces like any other warrior, you just... waited."

"Y-Yeah...," he blushed under his fur.

"You only resort to violence when you have to, don't you Cloudfur?"

"Yeah..," he murmured, unsure what to say. Coldholly stared at him. "Stop looking at me like that...," Cloudfur sighed, flicking his tail anxiously.

"I'm a medicine cat...," the tom chuckled, "I'm sorry I can't help myself... little secret of mine is..," Coldholly glanced around as if some cat may hear, leaned over and murmured, "I have the ability to see auras."

Cloudfur stayed quiet. Coldholly rolled his eyes. "They're like... electricity radiating from a cat's body. Like colors... telling me everything about you."

"Like what...?" His breath quickened. He wanted to dismiss 'auras' as mouse brained, but couldn't help himself. Coldholly looked intently

at him, his eyes calculating his next words.

"I know your fears... I know your passions," he replied quietly, "You have nothing to be ashamed of, Cloudfur." Before he could reply, Coldholly turned sharply.

"We should get going before we freeze out here. Let me guide you home."

They walked for only a dozen minutes, yet it seemed like a moon stretched out a simple timeline. He kept catching Coldholly's eye, which held indifference and some other emotion he couldn't pinpoint. *He's the BreezeClan medicine cat..*, Cloudfur thought, impressed and disappointed at the same time. He cursed his foolish hopes; they were only meant to fulfill a prophecy, nothing more.

As the pair neared the FallClan camp entrance, Coldholly stopped in his tracks. He paused, glancing at him to speak. For a few moments, the dark tom stayed silent.

"What did Birchspark say to you?" Coldholly's voice cracked. Cloudfur stared at him, but the tom avoided his gaze. His eyes were filled with such despair, as if locked into a window of time far within the past.

Cloudfur swallowed,

"*Little specks of snow*
Is but a vision to a crow

Circles in the sky
Reveals the light that might die."

Chapter 5

He left like a spark. The harsh cold nibbled at Cloudfur's ears, and he wondered how he could even hear Coldholly through such terrible winds.

Only when he fell into his nest did he realize that the warmth he felt with Coldholly was unnatural. He now shivered profusely in his sleep.

A harsh paw prodded his side. He groaned, opening his eyes to a furious Scorchflower.

"You were out last night. Weren't you." She hissed. Cloudfur felt her scorn radiate. He nodded slowly; he was a terrible liar anyway.

"I just needed time for myself...," he murmured, avoiding her gaze.

Sunflicker scoffed, "No. You were with some one."

"I wasn't..." His voice was hollow; what could he say? Telling her the prophecy wasn't his place.

"Really? Because you could have freezed your *ass* off out there." He flinched, feeling like a guilty kit.

"Well, I didn't okay!? I just had to handle some business."

"What business...?" She titled her head, "Any business of yours is Krestlestar's business," she lashed her tail. "I know you did something."

"No, I *didn't*," Cloudfur stood, bristling now. *We were so close,* he thought. *Why doesn't she trust me?!*

She rolled her eyes. "Cloudfur I support your sexuality as a friend but as your Clanmate, you can't go chasing cats outside our Clan...!" She sighed.

Cliudfur flushed, his heart rising a fraction with anger, "How dare you-" he took a step forward.

"Don't even start! You were *hooking up* with some tom. Am I right?" She cut him off, glaring at him with loathsome eyes. Cloudfur blushed under his fur.

"You don't even understand!" He hissed, "I am *soo* tired of you, Sunflicker, you're so different now - and always accusing me of being a *slut*...," his voice broke. Did being gay just mean he'd sleep around with toms to her? He pushed past her into the bitter camp.

"Cloudfur...," her voice rose, "Don't you walk away from me!" Sunflicker caught up to him, then whispered harshly, "You still don't think I won't tell the Clan about your little secret? Because I *will*! I will do what's best for FallClan."

"Just because Jaggedscar betrayed you doesn't mean you can't trust me," gazed into her eyes. "Look at you! You're a mess and you can't even see-"

"Shut up! At least I'm not *gay*," she snapped. With that Sunflicker stormed off. Cloudfur growled, digging his claws in the ground. She was only hurt and taking it out on him. At least that's what he wanted to believe.

Truth be told he didn't want his Clan to know he was gay. If they knew it'd make things awkward. An ongoing misconception: gay cats were all too horny to have a mate. Not only that but most saw it as wrong, vile, an unnatural attraction. Half of his Clan would turn their back on him.

He didn't need the attention coming out would bring, especially now that he was part of a prophecy...

"Cloudfur, there you are sleepy-head!" Jaggedscar purred. "You'll be going with Sageneck and Whiteflower to the BreezeClan border." *Just my luck,* Cloudfur thought. If Coldholly was there...

"BreezeClan?" He asked.

"There's been a sighting of a cat crossing the border just recently.

We're gonna go check it out," Whiteflower mewed, "Come on, cutie, let's go catch the culprit." *Cutie?! We grew up together!*

Cloudfur walked in step with Sageneck, flicking his tail in surprise. Kits retreated to the nursery and warriors ate the freshly killed prey of the hunting patrol that had just came back. The sky was a dark blue, settling into a new nightfall. Soon they'd be sleeping.

"Haha got you some tail there, don't you Cloudfur?" Sageneck chuckled as they both followed Whiteflower. She was a pretty white-and-gray she-cat.

"Don't start," he chuckled softly, blushing. They caught up to her quickly, tuning their ears and noses to the cold forest.

They snaked across the terrain, studying the branches and moist snow patches. No pawprints yet.

"It was probably just a loner," Sageneck chuckled, "Or, hell, one of our own."

"Probably.... It was an apprentice who saw it," Whiteflower agreed. "What do you think Cloudfur?"

"Um, I'm not sure...," he pawed at a rock.

"Thats why I like you, you're always so quiet," she smiled. "But you need to stand up for yourself more..."

"Yeah, you are a little *too* quiet!" Sageneck agreed. He frowned. Cats made him nervous... It wasn't something he could stop. "Why is that?"

"I...," he looked away, "I don't know what to say," he blushed under his fur, slowing his pace. They stopped, looking at him.

"It's ok, you're not too quiet; in fact, *we're* too loud!" Whiteflower smiled warmly. He shrugged, padding after the two. Sageneck rubbed his head against his shoulder.

The trio reached the border, sniffing around for any clues to the mysterious cat.

"Looks like Darkpaw was just playing," Sageneck grunted. They searched around a bit more, just in case. Cloudfur brushed past a few suspicious leaves, spotting small indentions in the snow.

"Hey, I found pawprints," Cloudfur called. He sniffed... *Coldholly...* He swallowed. His scent was the smell of mint and lavender; he blushed, looking to where the prints led.

"It was BreezeClan alright," Sageneck padded up beside him. "Fresh too."

"I'll track him down," Cloudfur mewed, "You guys can stay here; too many cats and he'll smell us all."

"Smart," Whiteflowera agreed, "Don't take too long and be careful!"

"I will," the tom nodded. Cloudfur breathed in slowly, crouching against the evergreen trees and dry earth of their territory. He listened to the faint call of birds, preparing for another long, cold night.

A smooth wind trailed shivers along his flank. He bristled. Now out of hearing range, he could say whatever he liked. Do whatever he liked. If only for a short time.

"Coldholly...?" He whispered, scanning the trees. Cloudfur pushed further, curling his tail. He frowned.

Paws thumping against the undergrowth alerted him. He whipped around only to the knocked overa. Coldholly was above him in an instant, smirking. He looked away, blushing.

"Pinned you again," he purred, brushing the tip of his tail against Cloudfur's cheek as he unpinned him.

"Maybe I wanted you to," Cloudfur chuckled at his poor attempt at flirting.

"Well you should have attacked me." He flicked his tail, grinning. "I am a BreezeClan warrior after all." They settled into a comfortable silence.

"But you got me home safely...," Cloudfur mewed and took a step forward, "I didn't get a chance to thank you."

"You're very much welcome. What kind of medicine cat would I be if I let you go home alone on such a night?" Coldholly studied Cloudfur coolly, then grunted, "I needed to talk to you."

"Me too... Did you know Birchspark?" Cloudfur sat beside him timidly.

"Yes. A long time ago..." He replied. "We were littermates."

"I'm sorry."

Coldholly stared him in the eye, "Don't you dare be sorry. You say that too much for you own good..." His green eyes were soft.

Cloudfur blushed. "How-"

"It's the aura thing," Coldholly explained, "It can be such a pain sometimes. Birchspark left the Clan... I'm not sure why..."

"Oh..."

"Cloudfur! Cloudfur, you out there?"

"Shhhh! Or you'll wake all the prey from here to FallClan!"

"*Sorry*! Cloudfur..."

"I have to go..," he frowned.

"Me too. Can you meet me here tonight?" Coldholly touched his nose to his ear. Cloudfur shivered.

"Yeah..." He sighed softly. "We need to talk about the prophecy."

"Mhmhmm."

Kinda weird chapter~ tell me what you want to happen next XD